

# *The Bad-Tempered Man (Dyskolos)*

The papyrus codex of the *Dyskolos* was published in 1958, the first complete play of Menander to have been discovered in the sands of Egypt (see Introduction). It is damaged in places; there are several lacunae of four or more lines where the papyrus is torn and many gaps where half-lines, whole words, or a few letters are missing or illegible.

## **Characters**

PAN (Prologue)

CHAIREAS, a toady

SOSTRATOS, a rich young man

PYRRHIAS, Sostratos' slave

KNEMON, an old misanthrope

THE GIRL, his daughter

DAOS, the old slave of Gorgias

CHORUS of worshippers of Pan

GORGIAS, Knemon's son by a previous marriage

SIKON, a cook

GETAS, a slave of Gorgias' father

SOSTRATOS' MOTHER

SIMICHE, Knemon's old servant

KALLIPPIDES, Sostratos' father

## ***Silent characters:***

PLANGON, Sostratos' sister

PARTHENIS, a pipe player

MYRRHINE, Gorgias' mother

DONAX and SYROS, slaves



*The scene is set in Phyle, a mountainous district in central Attica. In the middle of the stage is the shrine of Pan and the Nymphs, to the right the house of the old misanthrope Knemon, to the left that of his son Gorgias.*

## Prologue

*The god PAN enters from his shrine and addresses the audience.*

PAN. You must imagine we're in Attica;  
 Phyle's the place; the shrine\* from which I come  
 Belongs to Phyle's people and the men  
 Who farm these rocky heights as best they can,  
 A holy place exceedingly well known.  
 This farm here on the right is Knemon's home,  
 An utter misanthrope, cross-grained to all;  
 He hates the crowd—he hates the crowd, I say?  
 He's getting on, yet never in his life  
 Has spoken willingly to anyone  
 Or greeted anyone except me, Pan,  
 His neighbour, as he must when passing by,  
 And then he's promptly sorry that he spoke,  
 I'm sure of that. And yet despite his ways  
 He wed a widow whose first husband had  
 Just died, leaving a son, a baby then.  
 He fought with her not only in the day  
 But most of every night—a wretched life.  
 He had a daughter by her. Things got worse.  
 But when her troubles were beyond repair,  
 Her life laborious and harsh, the wife  
 Went off back to the son she'd borne before.  
 He had a little plot not far from here,  
 Where now in hardship he supports himself,  
 His mother, and one loyal family slave.  
 The boy by now's become a lad with sense  
 Beyond his years—experience brings men on.  
 The old man with his daughter lives alone  
 And has but one old servant; so he digs

10

20

30



And carries wood; it's work, work, work for him,  
Hating his neighbours most, and wife, and then  
The whole world to Cholargos\* far below.

The girl, brought up in total innocence,  
Remains unchanged. She cultivates the nymphs  
Who live with me with careful reverence;

So she's persuaded us to have some care

For her; I've made a youth, a city boy,

Whose father's rich and farms a great estate

40

Not far from here, go hunting with a friend

And happen to come near her home; I've made

Him fall head over heels in love with her.

These are the main points; and the rest you'll see,

If you are willing; and willing you must be!

But look! I think I see this lover now

Draw near, together with his huntsman friend;

They're deep in talk about the whole affair.

*[Exit into shrine]*

## ACT I

*Enter SOSTRATOS and CHAIREAS from the right, deep in conversation.*

CHAIREAS. What's that you say? You saw a freeborn girl

50

Give garlands to the Nymphs\* here and you went

Away in love, at once?

SOSTRATOS. At once.

CHAIREAS. That's quick!

Had you decided as you left your home

To fall in love with someone?

SOSTRATOS. Chaireas,

You're laughing at me. I'm in a bad way.

CHAIREAS. I believe you.

SOSTRATOS. That is why I've come with you

To help me, since I think you are my friend

And very competent.

CHAIREAS. Well, Sostratos,



In cases of this sort, this is my policy:  
 One of my friends falls for a courtesan  
 And calls me in: I seize the girl at once  
 And bring her; I get drunk, burn down the door,\*  
 Reject all sense! We don't know who she is  
 But he must have her now. For slowness feeds  
 Such love; quick action brings a quick relief.  
 But someone speaks of marriage, a free girl,  
 I am another man then; I inquire about  
 Her family, finances, character;  
 For now I leave my friend all I arrange  
 In this affair to be a record for  
 All time.

60

SOSTRATOS. Yes, very good. [*Aside*] But not quite what I want.

CHAIREAS. And now we must hear all the facts.

70

SOSTRATOS. I sent my fellow-huntsman, Pyrrhias,  
 From home at dawn today.

CHAIREAS. To whom?

SOSTRATOS. To meet

The father of the girl or master of  
 The house, whoever he may be.

CHAIREAS. Good god!

What are you saying?

SOSTRATOS. I was wrong. Perhaps

This sort of thing was not a servant's job.

But it's not easy for a man to see

What's best when he's in love. But I'm surprised

At his delay. I told him to return

At once when he had learnt the set-up here.

80

*Enter PYRRHIAS from the left, running and breathless.*

PYRRHIAS. Let me through! Look out! All of you, out of the way!  
 A raving loony's after me.

SOSTRATOS. What, boy?

PYRRHIAS. Run! Run!

SOSTRATOS. What's up?

PYRRHIAS. He's pelting me  
 With clods and stones. I'm done for.



SOSTRATOS. Pelting you?

Where are you going, fool?

PYRRHIAS [*stopping*]. Perhaps he's not

Still chasing me.

SOSTRATOS. He's not.

PYRRHIAS [*looking round*]. I thought he was.

SOSTRATOS. What do you mean?

PYRRHIAS. I beg you, let's get out.

SOSTRATOS. Where to?

PYRRHIAS. As far as may be from that door.

Some child of Woe, or else a man possessed

Or melancholy-mad, lives in the house here,

90

The man you sent me to—what agony!

I've stubbed and broken nearly all my toes.

SOSTRATOS. Good god! What's he been up to on his way?

Some drunken trick?

CHAIREAS. He's clearly off his head.

PYRRHIAS. No, Sostratos, by god, may I be damned

And blasted, if I am. Be on your guard!

But I can't speak. My breath is choking me.

[*He pauses for breath*]

I knocked at that door there and said that I

Was looking for the master of the house;

A miserable old woman answered me;

From where I'm standing now she pointed out

100

The fellow on the hill there wandering round

Unhappily and collecting pears, a load

Of trouble for himself.

CHAIREAS [*aside*]. How cross he is!

What next, my friend?

PYRRHIAS. I set foot on his plot

And walked towards him, and from some way off—

I wished to seem a friendly, tactful sort

Of man—I said, 'Father, I've come to see

You on a matter that's for your own good.'

Immediately he says, 'You're on my land;

You villain, what's your game?', takes up a clod

110

And hurls it at my face.



CHAIREAS. To hell with him!

PYRRHIAS. I shut my eyes and said, 'God blast you!', then  
He took a stick this time and beat me up,  
Saying, 'What business have you and I  
Together? Don't you know the public road?'  
Shouting with all his might.

CHAIREAS. The farmer is  
Quite mad from what you say.

PYRRHIAS. But hear the rest:

I fled; he chased me for about two miles,  
First round the hill, then down below into  
This thicket, pelting me with clods and stones 120  
And pears when he had nothing else, a wild  
And savage beast, a barbarous old sod.  
Please, please, get out!

SOSTRATOS. No, that's the coward's way.

PYRRHIAS. But you don't know how dangerous things are.  
He'll eat us all.

CHAIREAS. Perhaps he is a bit  
Upset just now. And so I think we should  
Put off approaching him; for, Sostratos,  
You know, in everything success depends  
On finding the right time.

PYRRHIAS. That's sensible.

CHAIREAS. Poor farmers are sharp-tempered folk; he's not 130  
The only one, they're nearly all like this.  
At dawn tomorrow I'll go to him alone—  
I know the house; now you go home and wait.  
That will be best. [*Exit CHAIREAS to the right*]

PYRRHIAS. Let's do just as he says.

SOSTRATOS. He's gladly taken an excuse to go.

It's clear he didn't want to come with me  
At all, and didn't like my marriage plans.  
[*To PYRRHIAS*] But you, may all the gods annihilate  
You utterly as you deserve, you rogue.

PYRRHIAS. But, Sostratos, please, what have I done wrong? 140

SOSTRATOS. You did some damage to his land, that's clear;  
You stole something.



PYRRHIAS. I stole?

SOSTRATOS. Did someone beat  
You up when you were doing nothing wrong?

*Enter KNEMON from afar left.*

PYRRHIAS. Yes—here he is himself. I'm off, my friend,  
And *you* can talk to him. *[Exit PYRRHIAS right]*

SOSTRATOS. I can't. In talk  
I never can convince a soul. *[Looking at KNEMON approaching]*  
What should

One say about this man? He does not seem  
To have a very friendly look. God, no!  
And what a rush he's in! I think I'll get  
Back from the door. That's better. And, what's more,  
He's shouting though he walks alone! He seems  
To me to be unwell. But I'm afraid 150  
Of him. By god, I am. And that's the truth.

*Enter KNEMON from the left, talking to himself.*

KNEMON. Now Perseus,\* wasn't he a lucky man  
In two respects? He could take wings on high  
And never meet the men who walked on earth.  
And then he had this gift with which he turned  
All people who annoyed him into stone.  
I wish I had that gift! Then there would be  
No shortage of stone statues everywhere!  
But now life's not worth living. No, it's not. 160  
Men trespass on my land and chat to me.  
*[Ironically]* I usually waste my time of course beside  
The very road! Why, I don't even work  
That part of my estate. I've left that bit  
To avoid the passers-by. But now they chase  
Me into the hills above. What swarming crowds!  
But help! Here's someone else standing beside  
My door!

SOSTRATOS *[aside]*. Does he intend to beat me up?

KNEMON. You can't find solitude, not anywhere,  
Not even if you want to hang yourself. 170



SOSTRATOS [*coming forward*]. Is it me you're angry with? I'm waiting here

For someone, father, as I had arranged.

KNEMON. Just what I said! Do you take this for a park

Or public meeting place?\* [*With heavy irony*] Well, if you want

To see someone, arrange to meet him here

Beside my doors; go on, by all means; yes,

Erect a bench, if that is what you want,

Or better still a council-room. [*As he enters his house*] Oh dear!

Malicious interference is the cause

Of all this trouble so it seems to me.

[*Exit into his house. SOSTRATOS is left alone on the stage*]

SOSTRATOS. This business requires, it seems to me,

No common effort, something more serious.

180

That's obvious. [*He reflects*] Getas, my father's slave,

Suppose I go to him? By heaven, I shall.

Yes, he's a ball of fire, experienced

In every kind of thing. He'll drive away

All the old man's bad temper, I'm quite sure.

For I refuse to tolerate delay.

Why, lots of things may happen in one day.

But someone's rattled on his door.

[*SOSTRATOS withdraws*]

*The GIRL comes out of KNEMON's door, carrying a water pot.*

GIRL.

Alas!

More trouble still! Oh, what shall I do now?

My nurse has dropped the bucket in the well.

190

SOSTRATOS [*aside*]. O father Zeus, Phoebus, and heavenly Twins,\*

What beauty irresistible!

GIRL.

And Dad

Told me to get the water hot as he

Went out to work.

SOSTRATOS [*to the spectators*]. Friends, what am I to do?

GIRL. But if he learns of this, he'll beat her up

And kill her for her crime. It's not the time

For idle talk. O dearest Nymphs, I must

Take water now from you. I am ashamed,



If anyone is making offerings inside,  
To bother you—

SOSTRATOS [*comes forward*]. But if you give the pot  
To me, I'll fill it from the spring at once  
And bring it back to you.

200

GIRL. O thank you. Please  
Be quick.

SOSTRATOS [*aside, as he goes into the shrine*]. A country girl she is, but  
how

Unlike a bumpkin. Gods above! what power  
Can save me now?

[*A door rattles*

GIRL. But help! Who made that noise?  
Is father coming back? Then I shall get  
A hiding, if he catches me outside.

[*The girl retires to KNEMON's door. But it is the  
door of GORGIAS' house that opens*

*Out comes DAOS, the old slave, talking to GORGIAS' mother who is  
inside; he does not see the GIRL.*

DAOS. I've spent a long time working here for you,  
While master digs alone. Now I must go  
To him. [*As he moves off*] O damn you, cursed Poverty,  
Why have we found you such a crushing weight?  
Why do you settle down so long inside  
Our house and make your home with us for good?

210

SOSTRATOS [*coming out of the shrine*]. Here, take the pot.

GIRL. Please bring it here.

DAOS [*aside*]. What does  
This fellow want?

SOSTRATOS. Goodbye to you, and take  
Good care of father.

[*Exit GIRL into KNEMON's house. SOSTRATOS soliloquizes,  
while DAOS watches him*

Hell! Oh, misery!

Stop moaning, Sostratos! It'll be all right.

DAOS [*aside*]. What does he mean 'all right'?

SOSTRATOS. Don't be afraid.

Tell Getas clearly, as you planned to do







I still care for my sister. Father wants  
To be a stranger to us, but don't let us  
Be like him in misanthropy. For if  
My sister fell into disgrace, I too must feel  
The shame. Outsiders never care who was  
To blame but only know the actual facts.  
*Come on, let's knock.*

DAOS.                                Sir, Gorgias, I'm scared  
Of the old man. If he discovers me  
Approaching near his door, he'll string me up  
At once.

GORGAS.    He's rather difficult, it's true,  
And quarrelsome; there's no way anyone  
Could force him to reform, or change his mind  
By good advice such as a friend might give.  
He has the law behind him to prevent  
Us using force; his character prevents  
Persuasion—

250

DAOS.                                Stop a bit! We've not come here  
For nothing; as I thought, he's coming back.

GORGAS. You mean the man there in that splendid cloak?

DAOS. That's him.

*Enter SOSTRATOS from the right.*

GORGAS.                                His looks at once show he's a rogue.

*[DAOS and GORGAS withdraw]*

SOSTRATOS. I did not find Getas within at home;  
Mother, all set to make a sacrifice  
To appease some god—I don't know which—she does  
This every day and round and round the whole  
District she goes, making her sacrifices—  
Had sent him out to hire a cook. I wished  
Her offerings luck and back I've come to deal  
With matters here. I'll stop this roundabout,  
I think, and speak out for myself. I'll knock,  
So that I can no longer hesitate.

260

GORGAS [*comes forward*]. Young man, would you be willing to  
attend



To something rather serious I want to say?

SOSTRATOS. Yes, very gladly. So say on.

270

GORGAS.

I believe

For every man, both rich and poor, there is  
A limit to their fortune which brings change.

The wealthy man's success in life remains

Unbroken only for so long as he

Can bear his luck without committing wrong.

But when he comes to that, led on by his

Prosperity, he suffers then a change for worse.

The poor, as long as they do nothing wrong

280

In their distress but bear their cruel fate

With honour, still may come in time to win

Some credit\* and expect a better lot.

What do I mean? Though you are very rich,

Don't put your trust in that and don't

Despise us poor men; prove yourself to all

Who see you worthy of good luck that lasts.

SOSTRATOS. But do you think I'm acting wrongly now?

GORGAS. You seem to me to have planned a wicked crime,

Intending to seduce a freeborn girl

290

Or watching for a chance to do a deed

Deserving death twice over.

SOSTRATOS.

Gods above!

GORGAS. It's certainly not right your idleness

Should upset us who never can be idle.

You surely know, a poor man, when he's wronged,

Is hardest of all men to tamper with.

First, he rouses pity,\* then he treats

All that he's suffered not as simply wrong

But as an outrage.

SOSTRATOS.

Friend, as you may hope

To have some luck, please hear a word from me.

DAOS. Master, well said! May you be blessed for this!

300

[DAOS is applauding GORGAS' words, disregarding  
SOSTRATOS' interruption]

SOSTRATOS. You too, who speak before you know the facts.

I saw a girl here and I fell in love.



If that's the wrong you mean, perhaps I did  
Do wrong. For what else can I say? Except  
I don't come here to her but want to see  
Her father. I'm freeborn, well-heeled enough,  
And ready to accept her with no dowry,  
And guarantee to cherish her for life.  
But if I came here with some wrong intent  
Or wanting to plot ill behind your backs,  
May Pan here and the Nymphs now strike me dumb,  
Right here, beside the house. Believe me, I'm most  
Upset I seem to you that kind of man.

310

GORGAS. Well, if I spoke more hotly than I should,  
Don't let that go on worrying you. For you've  
Convinced me now and have me as your friend.  
And I'm concerned in this, as I'm the girl's  
Half-brother, let me tell you that, good friend.

SOSTRATOS. Good god, then you can help me with the rest.

320

GORGAS. Help? How?

SOSTRATOS. I see you have a noble heart—

GORGAS. I don't intend to pack you off with vain  
Excuses; I will tell the simple truth.  
There's never been a human in the past  
Or in our own time like the father of  
This girl.

SOSTRATOS. That old curmudgeon? Yes,  
I think I know.

GORGAS. He's bad as bad can be.

He has this farm that must be worth a cool  
Two talents;\* yet he goes on farming it  
Alone; he has no man to work with him,  
No servant of his own, no labourer hired  
From the vicinity, no neighbour even,  
But just himself, alone. He'd be best pleased  
If he saw no one, but he usually takes  
His daughter with him when he goes to work  
And only talks to her. Apart from her  
He'd hate to speak to anyone. He says  
He'll marry her to someone when he finds

330



At last a bridegroom something like himself.

SOSTRATOS. That must mean never.

GORGIAS. So don't bother, friend;

You'll waste your labour. Leave his family

To bear the burden fortune's given us. 340

SOSTRATOS. Good god, man, have you never been in love

With anyone?

GORGIAS. Impossible, my friend.

SOSTRATOS. Why's that?

What is to hinder you?

GORGIAS. Thinking about

My present troubles never gives me time.

SOSTRATOS. I don't suppose you have; at least you talk

Like one with no experience in love.

You tell me to back off. The god\* alone

Can stop me; it's no longer up to me.

GORGIAS. Well then, you're doing us no wrong, but you

Are suffering pointlessly.

SOSTRATOS. Not, if I win

The girl.

GORGIAS. You'll never win her, *as you'll see*,

If you will come with me *and stand by him*; 350

He's working in that valley just near us.

SOSTRATOS. Well then?

GORGIAS. I'll make some chance remark about

Her marrying; for I myself would love to see

This happen. Straightaway he'll have it in

For everyone, and shout abuse at how

Men lead their lives. And if he sees you there,

Idle and proud, he won't endure the sight.

SOSTRATOS. Is he there now?

GORGIAS. He's not, but very soon

He'll come out by his usual way.

SOSTRATOS. My friend,

Do you think he'll bring the girl with him?

GORGIAS. He may,

Or maybe not. 360

SOSTRATOS. I'm ready then to go



Where you propose. But, please, give me support.

GORGAS: How?

SOSTRATOS. How, you ask? Come, let's push on.

DAOS [*intervenues*].

Well, then?

Are you to stand beside us while we work

Wearing that cloak?

SOSTRATOS. This cloak? Why ever not?

DAOS. Because he'll pelt you straightaway with clods,  
And then abuse you as an idle pest.

No, you must dig with us. For seeing this,

He might perhaps endure a word from you,

Supposing you a farmer, poor like us.

SOSTRATOS. I'm ready to obey your every word.

370

[*He takes off his cloak and leaves it in the shrine*]

Lead on!

GORGAS. Why force yourself to suffer so?

DAOS [*aside*]. I'd like us all to work flat out today

And him to wrench his back and then to stop

Annoying us by coming here.

SOSTRATOS. Bring out a fork!

DAOS. Come and take mine. I'll mend the wall a while,

For that needs doing too.

SOSTRATOS. Then give it here.

[*To GORGAS*] You've saved my life—

DAOS. I'm off, young master, then.

You follow on!

[*Exit DAOS left*]

SOSTRATOS. For this is how I stand—

I die today or marry her and live.

GORGAS. If you are really saying what you feel,

380

Then all good luck to you.

[*Exit to the left*]

SOSTRATOS. O honoured gods above!

You thought you'd put me off by what you said

Just now, but no, you've made me doubly keen

To win her hand. For if the girl has not

Been brought up amongst women and has learnt

Nothing about life's evils from the tales

Some aunt or nanny tells to terrify,

But schooled by her own father liberally,



Who may be rough but hates all wickedness,  
Surely he must be blessed who wins this girl.

[*He shoulders the mattock*

This mattock weighs a ton. It'll be the death

390

Of me. But still I must not now go soft,

When I have just begun to sweat it out.

[*Exit to the left*

*Enter SIKON, the cook, from the right, carrying a sheep; GETAS follows, well behind.*

SIKON. A fine sheep I've got here, remarkable!

O, go to hell! If I lift him off the ground

And carry him, he gets hold of a fig branch

In his mouth and eats the leaves and pulls like mad.

But if I put him on the ground, he won't

Budge on. Our roles are topsy turvy; I,

The cook, am cut to pieces by the sheep,

As I haul him along the road just like a ship.\*

But here with any luck must be the shrine

400

Where we will sacrifice. So greetings, Pan!

Hey! Getas, are you left so far behind?

*GETAS emerges, carrying a mass of rugs and other clobber.*

GETAS. Yes, for those blasted women tied a load

Four asses could not carry on my back.

SIKON. It looks as if a fairish crowd is due.

What stacks of rugs you're carrying!

GETAS.

What should I

Do now?

SIKON. Well, stick them here.

GETAS.

Then there you are.

You see, if she should have a dream and see

Pan of Paiania,\* we'll be off for sure

To him at once, to make a sacrifice.

SIKON. Who saw a dream?

GETAS.

Don't wear me out, man.

SIKON.

Still,

Do tell me, Getas, who was it saw the dream?

410

GETAS. My mistress.



SIKON. Tell me what she dreamt she saw.

GETAS. You'll do for me. She thought that the god Pan—

SIKON. This Pan?

GETAS. Yes, this—

SIKON. Was doing what?

GETAS. Took hold of my young master, Sostratos,

SIKON. A nice young man—

GETAS. And fastened fetters on  
His legs—

SIKON. Good god!

GETAS. Then gave him a rough coat  
And fork and ordered him to dig the plot  
Near by.

SIKON. How weird!

GETAS. And that is why we have  
To sacrifice, so that this fearful dream  
May turn out for the best.

SIKON. I understand.

Lift up this stuff and carry all inside.

Let's make some pretty beds of straw in there

420

And get all else prepared. Nothing must stop

The sacrifice when they at last arrive,

May all go well! Stop frowning, you poor chap!

I'll fatten you up properly to-day. [Exit SIKON into the shrine

GETAS. Well, I have always praised you and your skill,  
But all the same I don't trust you an inch.

[Exit into the shrine

## CHORAL INTERLUDE

## ACT 3

KNEMON comes out of his house, speaking to SIMICHE over his shoulder.

KNEMON. Now lock the door, old woman; open up  
To none till I return again, and that  
Will be when it's completely dark I think.



*The party of worshippers appears from the right, led by SOSTRATOS' MOTHER, who is followed by her daughter, PLANGON, the piper, and slaves. KNEMON watches from his door.*

SOSTRATOS' MOTHER. Plangon, come on, speed up; we should  
have made  
The sacrifice by now.

430

KNEMON. What's this to-do?

A mob of people! oh, to hell with them.

MOTHER. Come, Parthenis, and play your pipe for Pan.  
They say that one should not approach this god  
In silence.

*Enter GETAS from the shrine.*

GETAS. Lord! You're safely here at last.

KNEMON [*aside*]. Good god, how odious!

GETAS. We've hung around  
For ages waiting.

MOTHER. But is everything  
All ready for us?

GETAS. Yes, it is. At least  
The sheep is ready—almost dead.

MOTHER. Poor thing!

It will not wait for you to take your time.

Go in and get the basket\* ready and

440

The holy water and the sacred grain.

[*To KNEMON*] What are you gaping at, you half-wit, you?

*[Exit with the sacrificial procession into the shrine]*

KNEMON. O, go to hell the lot of you! They stop  
Me working. For I can't desert the house  
And leave it empty. But the Nymphs next door  
Are a perpetual plague; I think I'll have  
To move again—knock down the house and go.  
The sacrifices that these devils make!  
They bring their picnic hampers and their jars  
Of wine not for the gods but for themselves.  
A pinch of incense and a holy cake  
Are offerings of true piety; they're burnt  
And god receives them all. But they put on

450



The altar for the gods only the tail  
 And gall bladder, the parts they cannot eat,  
 And guzzle down the rest themselves.\* Old hag,  
 Open the door at once. For I suppose  
 I must get on with jobs inside the house. *[Exit into his house]*

*Enter GETAS from the shrine, talking to someone inside.*

GETAS. Forgot the stewing pot, you say? You must  
 Be sleeping off an orgy. So now what .  
 Are we to do? Pester Pan's neighbours, I  
 Suppose. *[He crosses to KNEMON's door and calls]*

Hey, boy! *[He waits]* By god, I do not think  
 There are more useless servants anywhere. 460  
 Boys! Sex is the only thing they know about—  
 Hey, lovely boys—and telling slanderous lies,  
 If someone sees them at it. Come on, BOY!  
 What is the matter? BOYS! No one at home?  
 Hallo! there's someone running to the door,  
 I think.

*[KNEMON flings open the door in a rage]*

KNEMON. Why are you pounding on my door,  
 You miserable man, just tell me that?

GETAS. Don't bite my head off.

KNEMON. Yes, I shall, by god,  
 And swallow you alive.

GETAS. God, don't do that.

KNEMON. Have you and I some contract, godless swine?

GETAS. No contract. No, I've not come here to ask 470  
 Repayment of a debt—I've brought with me  
 No witnesses—but just to ask you for  
 A stewing pot.

KNEMON. A stewing pot?

GETAS. That's right.

KNEMON. You rogue, do you think I'd sacrifice an ox  
 And act the way you do?

GETAS *[aside]*. I don't suppose  
 You'd sacrifice a snail! *[To KNEMON]* Goodbye, my friend.  
 The women told me to knock at your door



And ask you; so I did just that. You have  
No pot. Then I'll go back and tell them so.

*[He starts off back towards the shrine*

Great gods, a grizzled viper, that he is. 480

*[Exit into the shrine*

KNEMON. They're murdering animals. They come straight up  
And knock, as though I was a friend of theirs.  
If I see one of them come near our door,  
If I don't make him an example for  
The neighbourhood, consider me a mere  
Nonentity. This man, goodness knows who,  
Has got away with it—I can't think how.

*[Exit KNEMON into his house*

SIKON *comes out of the shrine shouting back to* GETAS.

SIKON. Well, damn you! He abused you, did he? Perhaps  
You asked him like a shit. *[To the audience]* Some folk have no  
Idea how they should do such jobs. I've learnt  
Some skill in this. For in the city I do work 490  
For thousands, and I pester those next-door  
And borrow pots from all. One has to use  
A little flattery when making a request  
For something. So, if it's an older man  
Answers the door, at once I call him 'Dad'  
Or 'Father'; older women I call 'Ma',  
If middle aged, I greet her 'Madam dear';  
If a young servant answers, say, 'Good friend';  
But you deserve to hang! What ignorance!  
'Boy! slaves!', you say. I'll show you how it's done.

*[He goes to KNEMON's door and knocks*

Come out, dad, come, I want to speak to you.

*[KNEMON bursts out of the door*

KNEMON. What, you again!

SIKON. My word, what's this?

KNEMON. Provoke 500

Me purposely, will you? Did I not tell  
You 'Don't come near my door'? Give me the whip,  
Old woman. *[He seizes hold of* SIKON



SIKON. No, stop that and let me go!

KNEMON. I let you go?

SIKON. I beg you, please, kind sir.

*[He wriggles out of KNEMON's grasp]*

KNEMON. Come back!

SIKON. God blast you!

KNEMON. You still blathering?

SIKON. I came to ask you for a pot-bucket

KNEMON. I haven't got a bucket or an axe,

Or salt or vinegar or anything.

I've told my neighbours straight they're not to come

Near me.

SIKON. You've not told me.

KNEMON. Well then, I tell

You now.

SIKON. Yes, and worse luck for you. Could you

510

Not even say where I could go and get one?

KNEMON. I warned you. Will you still keep nattering

At me?

SIKON. Good day, sir.

KNEMON. I don't want 'good day'

From any of you.

SIKON. Then, bad day to you.

KNEMON. This is intolerable!

*[Exit into his house]*

SIKON. He's pretty well

Chopped me to pieces. What a thing it is

To make a polite request! It really makes

A difference! Should one try the other door?

But that's not easy, if they're all round here

So quick to put on gloves\* and beat you up.

Perhaps it's best for me to bake the meat?

I think it is. I've got a roasting dish.

Goodbye to the Phylasians! I'll use

520

The things I've got to hand.

*[Exit into the shrine]*

*Enter SOSTRATOS from the left, rubbing his back and limping.*

SOSTRATOS. If anyone

Is short of troubles, let him come to hunt



In Phyle! Agony! Oh, what a state I'm in—  
 My back, my chest, my neck, the whole of me!  
 For I fell to at once like a young fool;  
 Swinging my mattock right up high, just like  
 A navvy, I dug deep and went at it  
 Much too industriously, but not for long.  
 Soon I kept turning round a bit to see  
 When the old man would turn up with the girl. 530  
 Then, heavens! I began, first furtively,  
 To feel my spine; and when an age had passed,  
 I started straightening out, but I was now  
 Becoming stiff as wood. And no one came.  
 The sun was scorching. Gorgias looked round  
 And saw me bobbing up and bobbing down,  
 With my whole body, like a pumping beam.\*  
 'I don't think he'll come now, young man', he said.  
 At once I answered, 'What are we to do?  
 Shall we watch for him tomorrow? but today 540  
 Let's give it up.' And Daos then appeared  
 To take my mattock over. So that's how  
 My first attempt turned out. I've come back here;  
 By god, I can't say why, but of its own  
 Accord the situation draws me here.

*Enter GETAS from the shrine in a cloud of smoke; he shouts at SIKON,  
 who is inside the shrine.*

GETAS. What is this? Do you think I've sixty hands?  
 It's I blow up the charcoal, fly around  
 And bring the offal, wash and cut it up,  
 And make the cakes, and carry round *the pots*,  
 Although I'm blinded by the smoke. They think 550  
 I'm just the donkey at the festival.\*

SOSTRATOS. Hey, Getas!

GETAS. Who's that calling me?

SOSTRATOS. It's me.

GETAS. And who are you? [*Rubbing the smoke from his eyes*]

SOSTRATOS. Can you not see?

GETAS. I see;



My master.

SOSTRATOS. Tell me what you're doing here?

GETAS. We've just this moment made the sacrifice

And now we're getting ready lunch for you.

SOSTRATOS. Is mother here?

GETAS. She's been here ages.

SOSTRATOS. And father?

GETAS. We're still expecting him. So in you go.

SOSTRATOS. I will, when I have done a little job.

*[He turns to the audience]*

This sacrifice has proved quite opportune.

I'll go in as I am,\* and I'll invite

This young man and his servant to the lunch. 560

For when they've shared our offerings, they'll be

More useful allies in my marriage plan.

GETAS *[grumbling to himself]*. What's that you say? You're going to  
invite

Some friends to lunch? As far as I'm concerned

Ask thousands; for I've always known I should

Not get a taste. How could I? Bring them all

Along. You've made a splendid sacrifice,

Well worth a look. But would the womenfolk,

Delightful ladies, give a share to me?

God, no, not even just a lick of salt.

SOSTRATOS. Getas, it'll be all right today. O Pan, 570

I'll make this prophecy myself; but still,

I'll always make a prayer to you when I

Pass by your shrine and I'll be generous.\*

*[Exit to left to find GORGIAS and DAOS]*

*Enter SIMICHE from KNEMON's house.*

SIMICHE. O misery, and misery again!

GETAS. O hell and blast! Some woman of the old

Man's now appeared.

SIMICHE. O, what will be my fate?

Wanting to save the bucket from the well

Myself, without the master knowing, if

I could, I tied the mattock to a weak



And rotten piece of rope, and then it broke—

580

GETAS [*aside*]. Ah, good!

SIMICHE. And so I've dropped the mattock too

Into the well to join the bucket. Oh!

GETAS [*aside*]. It's only left for you to throw yourself

In too.

SIMICHE. And master—what bad luck!—decides

To move some dung that's lying in the yard;

He's running round and looking for the fork

And shouting; now he's banging on the door.

GETAS [*aside*]. You poor old woman, run—he'll murder you—

Get out, or better still defend yourself!

KNEMON [*bursting out of his door*]. Where is the thief?

SIMICHE. Master, I did not mean

To drop it in.

KNEMON. Go on, inside!

SIMICHE. What do

You mean to do?

590

KNEMON. Do? Tie you up and let

You down the well.

SIMICHE. No, no, not that! alas!

KNEMON. I shall, and with the selfsame rope, by god.

GETAS [*aside*]. That's fine, if it is rotten through and through.

SIMICHE. Shall I call Daos from next door?

KNEMON. Shall you

Call Daos, wicked hag? you've ruined me.

Do you hear me? Quickly, get inside! [*Exit SIMICHE into the house*

Ah me!

Unhappy in my isolation now,

Of all men most unhappy. I'll go down

Into the well. What else is left to do?

GETAS. Then we'll provide a hook and rope for you.

KNEMON [*notices GETAS*]. May all the gods blast you to bloody  
hell,

600

You villain, if you say a word to me.

[*Exit into house*

GETAS. That's fair enough. He's burst back in again.

What an unhappy man! What a life he leads!

The Attic farmer in his purest form!



Battling with rocks which bear nothing but sage  
And thyme, he reaps a crop of pain and gets  
No good from it. But I must say no more—  
The master's here, bringing his guests with him.  
They're local labourers. How very odd!  
Why is he bringing them here now? How did  
He get to know them?

*Enter SOSTRATOS, GORGIAS and DAOS from the left.*

SOSTRATOS. I will not allow  
You to say no. 'We're all right thanks.' Good god!  
Would anyone on earth refuse to come  
To luncheon with a friend who's sacrificed?  
For I have been your friend, you know, since long  
Before I met you. [SOSTRATOS hands DAOS GORGIAS' tools  
Daos, take these things inside  
And then come back.

GORGIAS [to DAOS]. Don't leave mother alone  
But see to all her needs. I'll join you soon.

[*Exeunt, DAOS into GORGIAS' house, SOSTRATOS and GORGIAS  
into the shrine.*]

## CHORAL INTERLUDE

## ACT 4

SIMICHE *runs out of KNEMON's house, shrieking.*

SIMICHE. Won't someone help? O misery! Help! Help!

620

SIKON *comes out of the shrine, grumbling.*

SIKON. Good lord! by all the gods and spirits, please  
Let us get on with making our libations.\*  
You wail, abuse us, beat us up! A most  
Extraordinary house!

SIMICHE. My master's down  
The well!



SIKON. How's that?

SIMICHE. How? He was climbing down  
To get the fork and bucket out, when at  
The top he slipped; and so he's fallen in.

SIKON. You mean that difficult old sod? Good lord,  
He has done well! My dear old woman, now  
It's up to you. 630

SIMICHE. What do you mean?

SIKON. Why, get  
A mortar or a rock or some such thing  
And drop it on him from above.

SIMICHE. Dear friend,  
Go down the well.

SIKON. My god, to suffer what  
The man did in the story, fight the dog  
In the well!\* No Thanks.

SIMICHE [*shouts*]. Where are you, Gorgias?

*Enter GORGIAS from the shrine.*

GORGIAS. I'm here. What is the matter, Simiche?

SIMICHE. You ask me what? I tell you once again,  
My master's in the well.

GORGIAS. Here, Sostratos,  
Come out.

*Enter SOSTRATOS from the shrine.*

Lead on and quickly go inside.

[*Exeunt GORGIAS, SOSTRATOS and SIMICHE into  
KNEMON's house. SIKON is left alone on the stage*]

SIKON. The gods exist, by Dionysos! Yes.

You don't give us a stewing pot when we  
Are sacrificing; you're too mean for that,  
You wicked rogue? Then fall into the well  
And drink it dry, so you can't give a drop  
To anyone. The Nymphs have punished him  
For me, as he deserved. No one can wrong  
A cook and get away scot-free. Our art

Is somehow sacred. But waiters you can treat

Just as you like. [*Cries off-stage*] What? Surely he's not dead? 640



Some girl is weeping and bewailing her  
Beloved dad.

[*Lacuna of four lines; then three deficient; supplements speculative.*]

That's no concern of mine [*More cries off-stage*]  
*He must be still alive. Someone perhaps*

*Has gone right down the well to rescue him;* 650

*They'll tie him to a piece of rope and so*

They'll haul him up, that's obvious. Oh, what  
A sight! What do you think he'll look like then,  
Soaked to the skin and trembling? What a joke!  
I'd love to see him, friends, by god, I would.

[*He shouts to the women inside the shrine*]

But, women, pour libations for their sake 660

And pray the old man's rescue—may go wrong  
And leave him lamed and crippled. For that way  
He'll be a harmless neighbour to Pan here  
And to the folk who come to sacrifice.

That's my concern too, if I'm hired to cook

[*Exit SIKON into the shrine*]

*Enter SOSTRATOS from KNEMON's house and addresses the audience.*

SOSTRATOS. Friends, by Demeter, by Asklepios,

By all the gods, I never in my life

Have seen a man so nearly drowned, and so

Conveniently! What fun it was to watch!

For Gorgias, the moment we went in, 670

Leapt down into the well; the girl and I

On top did nothing; what were we to do?

Except she tore her hair and wept and beat

Her breast like mad. And I, the fool I was,

Stood by her, like her nurse, and begged and prayed

Her not to, gazing at that priceless work

Of art. But I cared less than nothing for

The casualty below, except I had to keep

On pulling him—that really was a bore. 680

And, god, I nearly sent him to his death

Three times at least; as I was gazing at

The girl, I let the rope go. Gorgias



However proved a true Atlas, held firm,  
 And finally has hauled him up. When he  
 Emerged, I came out here, because I could  
 Control myself no longer but almost  
 Dashed up and kissed the girl; I am in love  
 So desperately. I'm getting ready now—  
 They're rattling at the door!

*The door opens and KNEMON is wheeled out on a couch by GORGIAS  
 and the GIRL.*

God help me, what

690

An extraordinary sight!

GORGIAS. Knemon,  
 Say if there's anything you want?

KNEMON. What should  
 I say? I'm not too good.

GORGIAS. Oh, do cheer up!

KNEMON. I have cheered up. For Knemon now will cease  
 To give you trouble for all time to come.

GORGIAS. This is the evil consequence, you know,  
 Of isolation. Do you see? Just now  
 You were within a hair's breadth of your death.  
 From now on, then, at your age, you must live  
 With someone to look after you.

KNEMON. I know,  
 I'm not so well. Call me your mother, Gorgias,  
 And say it's urgent. Troubles alone, it seems,  
 Can teach us. 700

*[Exit GORGIAS to his house to fetch his mother;  
 KNEMON appeals to his daughter*

Daughter dear, please hold me tight  
 And help me up.

*[SOSTRATROS, seeing the girl putting her arms round  
 KNEMON, is madly jealous and comes forward*

SOSTRATROS. O, lucky man!

KNEMON. Why are  
 You standing there beside me, wretched man?

*[SOSTRATROS retires to the back of the stage*



GORGIAS and his MOTHER enter while KNEMON stands to make his harangue, supported by his DAUGHTER.

[*Lacuna of five lines, then three line-endings; supplements speculative.*]

KNEMON. *Listen, all of you; stand round me, while I tell you what I want.\**

*In the past I worked my heart out and I liked to work alone.*

*Neighbours seldom came to help me, so I managed by myself.*

*Gradually I came to realize I was better on my own.*

*Loneliness became habitual; I would rather die than change;*

*Death is welcome if you cannot live the way you want to do.*

*Hear then what I have decided. Myrrhine and Gorgias,*

*You perhaps may not approve of what I've chosen; all the same, 710*

*None of you could ever make me change my mind; you must give way.*

*One mistake perhaps I did make— thought myself alone of all Self-sufficient, never needing anything from anyone.*

*Now I see that death may strike one, swift and unpredictable;*

*So I've found how wrong I was then. Surely one must always have*

*Someone near to help. But, truly—I was quite unbalanced then,*

*When I saw, tho' men's lives differed, profit was their only goal—*

*I imagined no one ever would show kindness to another. 720*

*This it was that caused my blindness. Now one man, and one alone,*

*Gorgias, has proved my error, showing true nobility.*

*I'm the man who never let him near my door, who never gave him*

*Help at all, who never greeted, never spoke with courtesy—*

*All the same it's he has saved me. Any other man, quite fairly,*

*Might have said, 'You don't let me near. Now I'll not come near to you.*

*You yourself have never helped us, now I'll give no help to you.*

[GORGIAS shows signs of wanting to intervene

*What's the matter, boy? So whether I am now about to die—*



Which I think is very likely; I seem ill—or I survive,  
 I adopt you as my son, boy; all I own consider yours;  
 I entrust my daughter to you; you must find a husband for her.  
 Even if my health were perfect, I'd not find one; none would  
 ever

Satisfy me. As for Knemon, if I live, then let me live  
 As I wish. All else take over; manage things yourself. You are  
 Sensible, thank god, and care for your own sister, as you  
 should.

Split in two all my possessions; give one half to her as dowry;  
 With the rest support your mother and myself. So much for  
 that.

[*To his DAUGHTER*] Lie me down. I hold that no one should say  
 more than he needs must. 740

This, however, you must know, boy; certain things I wish to  
 say

Of myself, my way of living: if all men behaved like me,  
 Law-courts would exist no longer, men would no more haul  
 each other

Off to prison; war would cease then; all would live content  
 with less.

But perhaps you find more pleasure in your present ways—  
 good luck!—

This bad tempered misanthrope will be no longer in your way.  
 GORGIAS. All of this I gladly welcome. Now we quickly have to  
 find,

If you agree, a husband for her.

KNEMON. Hey, I've told you what I think.

Don't, for heaven's sake, annoy me. 750

GORGIAS. Someone's here who wants to meet you—

KNEMON. No!

GORGIAS. He's asking for your daughter.

KNEMON. That's no longer my concern.

GORGIAS. He's the one who helped to save you.

KNEMON. Who?

GORGIAS. He's here.

KNEMON. Come forward, you!

[*SOSTRATOS comes forward and KNEMON has a good look at him*]



Well, he's sunburnt; he's a farmer?

GORGIAS.

Yes indeed, father, he is.

He's no dandy, not the type to saunter idly all the day;

[*Six lines deficient; supplements speculative.*]

KNEMON. *I suppose then we must have him, if his family's all right.*

*Gorgias, you give her to him and arrange this whole affair.*

Wheel me in.

GORGIAS.

*Yes, certainly. Simiche, look after him.*

[SIMICHE wheels KNEMON into his house followed by MYRRHINE  
and KNEMON'S DAUGHTER. SOSTRATOS and GORGIAS are left  
alone on the stage]

SOSTRATOS. Nothing's left for you to do now but betroth your  
sister to me.

GORGIAS. You must ask your father's blessing

760

SOSTRATOS.

Father won't oppose the match.

GORGIAS. Then I call the gods to witness that I now betroth the  
girl,

Sostratos, to you and give her gladly, as is only right.

For you came to seek her hand with no disguise but  
open-hearted;

For this marriage there was nothing you were not prepared to  
do.

Spoiled you are, yet took the mattock, dug and laboured with a  
will;

This is how a man's true nature is revealed, when though he's  
rich

He's prepared himself to lower to the level of the poor.

Such a man will bear with courage all the changes chance may  
bring.

Proof you've given of your nature; may you only stay that way.

SOSTRATOS. Why, I hope I get much better. But self-praise  
perhaps is vulgar.

KALLIPPIDES *appears on the far right of the stage.*

There, I see my father coming, smack on time.

GORGIAS.

Kallippides!

He's your father?

SOSTRATOS.

Sure, that's father.



GORGIAS. He's a millionaire, by god;  
He certainly deserves his riches; he's a farmer none can beat.

[KALLIPPIDES *approaches talking to himself*

KALLIPPIDES. I suppose I've been abandoned; they have eaten all  
the sheep,

Gone away back to the farm now.

GORGIAS. God, he really does seem famished!

Shall we tell him all this moment?

SOSTRATOS. Better wait for him to lunch.

He'll be more amenable then.

[KALLIPPIDES *suddenly sees* SOSTRATOS

KALLIPPIDES. Sostratos, what's up? Is lunch

Finished?

SOSTRATOS. Yes, but plenty's over. In you go!

KALLIPPIDES. I'm going now. 780

[*Exit into shrine*

GORGIAS. If you like, go to your father; you can talk to him alone.

SOSTRATOS. You will stay inside then, won't you?

GORGIAS. Yes, I shall not stir from there.

SOSTRATOS. Well, I shall not be a moment. Then I'll call you out  
to us.

[*Exeunt—SOSTRATOS into the shrine, GORGIAS into KNEMON's house*

## CHORAL INTERLUDE

## ACT 5

*Enter SOSTRATOS and KALLIPPIDES from the shrine, talking.*

SOSTRATOS. You are not granting, father, all I wished  
Nor all that I expected.

KALLIPPIDES. Have I not

Agreed to all? I do want you to have

The girl you love, indeed, I say you must.

SOSTRATOS. I think not, father.

KALLIPPIDES. Certainly, I do,



For I know well the marriage is secure  
That's made by a young man inspired by love.

790

SOSTRATOS. So I'm to have the young man's sister then,  
Considering him good enough for us?  
How can you now say you'll not offer him  
My sister's hand?

KALLIPPIDES. That will not do at all.  
I have no wish to take at once a bride  
And bridegroom who are paupers. It's enough  
To have one in the family.

SOSTRATOS. You talk  
Of wealth, a thing on which you can't rely.  
For if you know that it will stay with you  
For ever, keep it then; don't give a share  
To anyone. But where you're not the master  
And hold it not by right but by the gift  
Of Fortune, father, don't begrudge a share  
Of this to anyone. For Fortune may  
Take all from you and hand it on perhaps  
To someone less deserving than yourself.  
And so I say that all the time you have  
It, father, you should use it generously,  
To help all men and through your means enrich  
As many as you can. Such deeds will live,  
And if you chance to fall yourself some time,  
You will receive a fair return from them.  
Far better, father, is a friend you see  
Than hidden treasure buried underground.

800

810

KALLIPPIDES. You surely know my nature, Sostratos;  
I shall not carry with me to the grave  
What I have gained. How could I? It is yours.  
You want to make a man your friend for good;  
You've tested him? Then do so, and good luck!.  
Why preach at me? Get on with it; you're right.  
Give, share! I'm totally convinced by you.

SOSTRATOS. And willingly?

KALLIPPIDES. Yes, willingly; that need.  
Not worry you.



SOSTRATOS.

Then I'll call Gorgias.

820

*Enter GORGIAS from KNEMON's house.*

GORGIAS. As I was coming out, I overheard  
 Beside the door all that you said from start  
 To finish. Well then? Sostratos, I think  
 You are a loyal friend, and I'm remarkably  
 Attached to you. But I don't wish to take  
 On what's too much for me, nor, if I wished,  
 Could I do so, I swear.

SOSTRATOS. What do you mean?

GORGIAS. I give my sister to you as your wife;  
 But as for marrying yours, I'd like to, but—

SOSTRATOS. Why 'like to but'?

GORGIAS. No pleasure, in my view,  
 Can come from living in the luxury  
 That's won by others' work; a man must make  
 His way himself.

830

SOSTRATOS. That's rubbish, Gorgias.  
 You're worthy of this marriage, don't you think?

GORGIAS. I consider myself worthy of her, yes,  
 But when I have so little, count myself  
 Unworthy to receive so much.

KALLIPPIDES. Almighty god!  
 Your sense of honour *makes you go too far.*

GORGIAS. What do you mean?

[The following seven lines are mutilated and their meaning disputed.]

KALLIPPIDES. You have *no money* yet you want  
 To seem *to other people to be rich.*  
 You see I've been convinced. *Give way yourself.*

[GORGIAS *reflects*]

GORGIAS. You have convinced me by your words. I would  
 Be doubly sick, in purse and mind, *if I*  
*Refused the only man who offered me*  
 Security.

840

SOSTRATOS [to his FATHER]. *That's splendid.* Now what's left  
 For us to do except to give our word?



KALLIPPIDES. My daughter I betroth to you, young man,  
To bear a crop of children in wedlock,  
And I shall give three talents as her dowry.

GORGAS. And for my sister's dowry I have one.

KALLIPPIDES. You have? Don't give too much.

GORGAS. I have the farm.

KALLIPPIDES. But, Gorgias, hang on to all of that.

Now bring your mother and your sister here  
To meet our womenfolk.

GORGAS. All right, I shall.

[Two lines deficient.]

SOSTRATOS. Let's all *stay here* tonight and celebrate; 850  
*Tomorrow* we shall hold the weddings. Gorgias,  
Bring Knemon here; perhaps the old man will  
Be better off with us.

GORGAS. He will refuse  
To come, my friend.

SOSTRATOS. Persuade him.

GORGAS. If I can,  
I will. [Exit into KNEMON's house

SOSTRATOS. Now, father, for us men we must  
Lay on a splendid binge; the ladies too  
Must make a night of it.

KALLIPPIDES. The opposite's  
More likely; they will drink, while we, I'm sure,  
Will not be short of night work. But I'll go  
And get things ready for the party now.

SOSTRATOS. Do so.

[Exit KALLIPPIDES into the shrine; SOSTRATOS is left alone

No man of sense should ever feel 860

Complete despair of any plan he makes.  
All things may be achieved by care and work.  
I'm now a living proof of this. One day  
Has seen me win a marriage which no one  
On earth would have thought possible.

*Enter GORGAS with his MOTHER and SISTER from KNEMON's house.*

GORGAS. Come on,



Speed up!

SOSTRATOS. This way. [*To his MOTHER in the shrine*] Mother, you must receive

These ladies. [*To GORGIAS*] Knemon not yet here?

GORGIAS. Not here!

He begged me to bring out the old hag too,

So he could be completely on his own.

SOSTRATOS. What a type! invincible!

GORGIAS. That's what he's like.

SOSTRATOS. Goodbye to him then! Let us go inside. 870

GORGIAS. But, Sostratos, I'm shy of being in

The company of women—

SOSTRATOS. Nonsense, man!

Come, in you go! Now we must think we're all

One family.

[*Exeunt GORGIAS and SOSTRATOS into the shrine*]

*Enter SIMICHE from KNEMON's house, speaking over her shoulder to KNEMON.*

SIMICHE. I'm going too. And you  
Will lie here on your own. Unhappy man!  
What a sad character! When they all wished  
To bring you to the god you still refused.  
A heap of trouble is in store for you,  
By both the goddesses,\* much worse than now.

*Enter GETAS, speaking to someone in the shrine.*

GETAS. I will go in and see how Knemon is.

[*The pipe plays\**]

GETAS. Why play your pipe at me, you wretch? I have no time for that yet. 880

They've sent me here to see the poor old invalid. So belt up!

SIMICHE. Yes, one of you must go inside and sit yourself beside him.

I'm losing my young mistress, so I want to have a chat first,  
To talk to her, kiss her goodbye.

GETAS. That's sensible. Go on then.

I will look after him a while.

[*Exit SIMICHE into the shrine*]



I made my mind up long since  
To take this opportunity, but had to work a plan out.  
[Two lines mutilated; supplements speculative.]

*Now let me see how Knemon is. If he's awake, I can't yet  
Begin what I have planned to do.*

*[He peeps in at the door*

*Ah good, he's sound asleep. Cook!*

Sikon, come out here, come to me and hurry up! Good  
heavens,  
What splendid fun I think we'll have!

*Enter SIKON from the shrine.*

SIKON.

You calling me?

GETAS.

I am, yes. 890

You want to get your own back now for what you went  
through lately?

SIKON. What *I* went through? You bugger off, you and your  
bloody nonsense.

GETAS. That difficult old rogue's asleep and all alone.

SIKON. How is he?

GETAS. Not altogether down and out.

SIKON. Could he stand up and hit us?

GETAS. He could not stand at all, I think.

SIKON. What lovely news you give me!

I'll go inside and ask for something. He will go quite bonkers!

GETAS. But look! Suppose we drag him out and then we dump  
him down here,

Bang at his door, and ask for things, and get him really heated.

I say, there'll be some fun in that!

SIKON. It's Gorgias I'm feared of— 900

If he should catch us on the job, he'd beat us up and thrash us.

GETAS. There's such a din inside the house; they're drinking; they  
won't hear us.

In any case we've got to tame the fellow. We're related;

He's now one of the family; suppose he never changes,

Shall we not have an awful job to tolerate his manners?

SIKON. Then just take care that no one sees you while you hump  
him out here.



GETAS. You lead the way!

SIKON. Please wait a bit. Don't steal away without me.  
For heaven's sake don't make a noise.

GETAS. I'm not, by Earth.

[*They enter the house and carry out the sleeping KNEMON*  
Keep right now.

SIKON. There!

GETAS. Dump him here. Now is the time. 909

SIKON. I'll lead. All right. You [*to the piper*] keep time.

[*SIKON goes to KNEMON's door and bangs loudly and rhythmically*

Boy! Boys! Hey, lovely boys! boys! Hey!

KNEMON [*waking up and groaning*]. Oh dear, oh dear! I've had it.

SIKON. Hey, lovely boys! Hey, boy! Hey, boys! Come on!

KNEMON. Oh dear! I've had it.

SIKON [*pretending to see KNEMON for the first time*]. Who's this? Do you  
come from this house?

KNEMON. Of course. What *are* you after?

SIKON. I want to borrow pans from you and trays.

KNEMON. Who'll help me stand up?

SIKON. You've got some, surely. And I need seven tripods and  
twelve tables.

But boys, inform the staff inside. I'm pushed for time.

KNEMON. I have none.

SIKON. You've not got one?

KNEMON. I've told you so a thousand times.

SIKON. I'm off then.

KNEMON. Oh misery! How've I got here? Whoever was it dumped  
me

Before the house?

[*GETAS comes forward to take over*

GETAS [*to SIKON*]. You then be off! It's my turn now. 920

[*GETAS bangs on the door*

Boy! Boys! men! women! porter!

KNEMON. Man, you're mad. You'll break the door down.

GETAS. Lend us nine rugs.

KNEMON. Wherever from?

GETAS. And eastern linen curtains

One hundred feet in length.

KNEMON. I wish I had a *whip* from somewhere.



Old hag! Where *has* the woman gone?

GETAS.

I'll try the other door here?

[GETAS *retires*

KNEMON. Get out! Hag! Simiche! [SIKON *approaches*] May all the gods blast you, you scoundrel.

What do you want?

SIKON. I want to have a big bronze wine bowl from you.

KNEMON [*tries to get up*]. Who'll help me up?

GETAS. You have the drapes, you really have them, grandad.

KNEMON. I've not by god!

SIKON. And no wine bowl? 930

KNEMON. I'll murder that old woman.

SIKON. Sit down, don't make a sound. You flee from crowds; you hate the ladies;

And you refuse to let us take you out to join the party  
With people making sacrifice. You must endure these tortures;  
There's no one here to help you now. So bite your lips and  
listen

[Six lines deficient; supplements speculative.]

*To all we did inside the shrine, preparing for the weddings.*

First, *when* the ladies from your place *had come along to join us*,  
Your wife and daughter were embraced and shook our hands  
in greeting.

They really did enjoy themselves. And I was getting ready,  
Not far away, a party for the men here—you listening?  
Don't go to sleep.

GETAS. No, don't.

KNEMON. Oh dear!

SIKON. What's that? You want to be there?

Now listen to the rest of it. Libations were all ready.  
A couch of straw was being spread upon the ground. The  
tables

I myself was laying out—that was, you see, my duty—  
You hear? I am the cook, don't you forget.

GETAS. He's coming round\* now.

[*as SIKON warms to his description, his language becomes elevated  
and poetic*

SIKON. One man was pouring vintage wine into a hollow vessel,



And mixing in the Nymphs' clear stream, he went right round  
and offered

A toast to all the men; meanwhile another pledged the ladies.  
You might as well pour water out into the sand!\* You get me?  
One of the girls, a trifle drunk, whose fair young face was  
shaded,

950

Took up the rhythm of the dance, from shyness hesitating  
And trembling, but another girl joined hands with her and  
danced too.

GETAS. You've had a dreadful accident, poor man; now dance,  
now join in.

[GETAS tries to pull KNEMON to his feet

KNEMON. What *do* you want, you wretched men?

[KNEMON resists

GETAS.

Try harder; up and join in.

You are so clumsy.

[They pull him up

KNEMON.

Don't, my god, please, don't.

GETAS.

Then do you want us

To lift you in?

KNEMON.

What shall I do?

GETAS.

Dance, dance!

KNEMON.

Oh, carry me then.

Perhaps it's better to endure the party there.

GETAS.

That's good sense.

We've won! Hooray! Donax,\*

*Enter DONAX from the shrine.*

and you as well,

Sikon, now lift him up and carry him

Inside. [To KNEMON] But you, look out! For if we find

960

You stirring things again, you may be sure,

We'll treat you pretty harshly. Someone give

Us garlands, torches!

[Garlands and torches are distributed to the actors; GETAS throws a  
garland to KNEMON

Here, this one's for you!

[To the audience] Well, if you've all enjoyed our victory  
Over this tiresome old curmudgeon, then



Boys, youths and men, give us a friendly clap.  
And may that noble, laughter-loving maid,  
Victory, attend us always as our friend.



## *Explanatory Notes*

### *The Bad-Tempered Man (Dyskolos)*

- 4 *the shrine*: the shrines of Pan were often caves and there was such a shrine not far from the village of Phyle, in which dedications to Pan and the Nymphs have been found. For the purposes of the play Menander has placed it near Knemon's house and has made it large enough to hold a considerable gathering.
- 5 *Cholargos*: this was a deme of the city of Athens, some twenty miles from Phyle.
- 5 *to the Nymphs*: the Nymphs, spirits of water and trees, were often associated with Pan. The girl was putting garlands on their statues.
- 6 *burn down the door*: by ancient convention excluded lovers sometimes burnt down the door to gain access to the girl they loved.
- 9 *Perseus*: when Perseus was sent to kill the Gorgon Medusa, Athene, to help him, gave him winged sandals. He killed the Gorgon and carried off her head which turned all who looked on it to stone.
- 10 *a park . . . a public meeting place*: 'park', literally 'a colonnade'; there were several colonnades in the Agora of Athens where people would meet and talk. 'Public meeting place', literally 'the shrine of Leos', a hero whose shrine was a common meeting place.
- 10 *heavenly Twins*: Castor and Pollux.
- 14 *Some credit*: a metaphor from finance.
- 14 *rouses pity*: juries in the Athenian courts were particularly sympathetic to poor litigants who would appear in rags etc. to rouse their pity.
- 15 *Two talents*: this was a considerable sum; Kallippides, a millionaire, gives three talents as the dowry for his daughter.
- 16 *The god*: i.e. the god of love, Eros.
- 18 *just like a ship*: ships were sometimes hauled on rollers across an isthmus to shorten a journey; this must have been a bumpy passage.
- 18 *Paiania*: Paiania was a deme about twenty miles from Phyle where there was a shrine of Pan.



- 20 *the basket*: the sacred basket contained items needed for a sacrifice—the sacrificial knife, barley grains for scattering on the victim's head, etc.
- 21 *the rest themselves*: when an animal sacrifice was made, only the inedible parts were burnt on the altar for the gods; the rest, as Knemon says, was divided up and eaten by the worshippers.
- 23 *put on gloves*: literally, 'engage in sparring practice'; in ancient boxing, gloves were worn for sparring, leather thongs for contests.
- 24 *pumping beam*: this was a pivoted beam used for drawing water from wells etc.; 'a rope carrying a bucket was attached to the longer arm, a counterweight to the shorter; hauling on the rope allowed the bucket to descend into the well; the rope was then released and the counterweight caused it to bring the full bucket to the surface' (Sandbach).
- 24 *the donkey at the festival*: an adaptation of the proverbial expression 'I'm the donkey celebrating the Mysteries'; the donkey carried a load of sacred utensils etc. while the humans enjoyed themselves.
- 25 *as I am*: i.e. without bothering to dress up in his fine cloak again.
- 25 *be generous*: i.e. he will give generous gifts to Pan.
- 27 *libations*: drink offerings made as a preliminary to a sacrifice.
- 28 *the dog* | *In the well*: in Aesop's fables when a gardener went down a well to rescue his dog, who had fallen in, the dog bit him.
- 31 *God help me, what*: the metre changes to trochaics for the remainder of this scene.
- 38 *By both the goddesses*: i.e. Demeter and Persephone, a common women's oath.
- 38 from this point the dialogue (in iambic tetrameters catalectic) seems to have been accompanied with music.
- 41 *He's coming round*: the Greek means literally: 'the man's soft'; on this interpretation Getas means Knemon is softening on his resolve not to join the party.
- 42 *pour water out into the sand*: i.e. women's thirst for wine can never be satisfied, an old canard.
- 42 *Donax*: a slave called in just to help carry off Knemon.